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City, County & Federal Officials to Break Ground on Berry Lane Park

***The 17-Acre Municipal Park will Transform Brownfields into Much-
Needed Park Space in the Morris Canal Neighborhood***

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy, the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency (JCRA), Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Judith Enck and other city and local officials will break ground at **11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 22, 2012** on the Berry Lane Park project located at 1000 Garfield Ave., Jersey City in the Morris Canal neighborhood.

Berry Lane Park will rejuvenate the **Morris Canal neighborhood** with a nine percent increase of usable space in Jersey City by transforming more than 17 acres of property – including former rail yards, junk yards, auto repair shops, industrial facilities, and warehouses – into the largest municipally-owned park in the City.

A settlement agreement that Pittsburgh, Paint and Glass (PPG) entered into with the City of Jersey City and the New Jersey DEP to clean up 21 chromium sites has paved the way for the creation of Berry Lane Park. Mayor Healy has made chromium cleanup and the transformation of brownfields into productive parcels of land a focus of his administration, evidenced at the Honeywell site, the former PJP site which is also being transformed into a park, and now Berry Lane.

“This is a vital project for our city, particularly for the residents of the Morris Canal neighborhood,” said **Mayor Healy**. “With sixty percent of the residents in the immediate area being children under the age of 18, Berry Lane Park will provide the space necessary for recreation and community involvement. The transformation of these fallow and deserted properties will also rid the area of an eyesore and contamination, and will make this neighborhood a more enjoyable place to live.”

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Acquisition of the 11 properties that comprise the first phase of the Berry Lane Park project spanned nearly five years and included extensive negotiations with property owners. All of the sites were brownfields – vacant, abandoned, or underutilized former industrial or commercial properties. Environmental investigations concluded that cleanup was required due to metals and petroleum contamination, and some of the project sites also included hexavalent chromium, a known carcinogen whose remediation is being managed by the JCRA on behalf of a responsible party. Remediation began in the summer of 2012.

“We were pleased to work on the Berry Lane Park project at the request of the administration,” said **Bob Antonicello, the Executive Director for the JCRA**. “When people think of the JCRA, they generally don’t think of park construction, but in the case of Berry Lane Park, the importance to the Ward F community couldn’t be overstated. It’s safe to say that Berry Lane Park is the key to renewal of the Lafayette and Jackson Hill communities.”

The park’s design has been the result of residents and local officials working through a series of charrettes with the project’s contracted architects and planners. When completed, Berry Lane Park will include two basketball courts, two tennis courts, a baseball field, a soccer field, a playground, 600 new trees, and a rain garden. The park will incorporate existing sites into the design, for example, concrete silos and remnants of the former rail yard will be outfitted with spraying mechanisms as to serve as a spray park.

The Morris Canal neighborhood includes a minority population of more than 70 percent, where nearly half of the residents speak a language other than English. The area also includes a poverty rate that is nearly twice the national average. Fortunately, this community includes residents who are engaged in the shaping the future of their neighborhood, including the plans for Berry Lane Park.

Federal, state, county, and local funding has been applied and received for the acquisition, relocation, demolition, environmental investigation and cleanup portions of the project. The JCRA is now in the process of securing development funds for the project.

“The EPA is committed to cleaning up brownfields, which can pose a risk to people’s health due to contaminants left behind. These contaminants can pollute soil and ground water,” said **Judith A. Enck, EPA Regional Administrator**. “The EPA is proud to have provided over \$2 million to help transform this contaminated property into a much needed urban park. Through this project, Jersey City has made a commitment to the health and well being of its residents.”

The following sources of funding have been committed thus far to the project:

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| · PPG reimbursement for remediation | \$ 5.5 million |
| · Hudson County Open Space | \$ 4.4 million |
| · City of Jersey City | \$ 3 million |
| · NJ DEP Green Acres | \$ 2 million |

(more)

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· EPA Cleanup Grants	\$ 1.4 million
· CDBG grants	\$ 1.5 million
· PPG Environmental Trust	\$ 600,000
· EPA Assessment Grants	\$ 600,000
· NJDEP HDSRF Grants	\$ 414,287
· Neighborhood Stabilization Program	\$ 315,286
· Hudson County EDC EPA loan	\$ 273,000
· Hudson County EDC EPA subgrant	\$ 205,000
· Developer Contribution (metro homes)	\$ 200,000

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///